

Against the Grain

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People Profile: Glen Worthey

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"Long Live the Corpse!"
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very best content, demand that these journals be available in stable form, and for the long term; and these journals themselves, in the person of their authors, editors, and readers, require some affordable and dependable mechanism to assure their longevity. **LOCKSS** software meets all these requirements.

The Absinthe Literary Review was established in 1998, and chosen as one of the first open-access humanities journals to be preserved by **LOCKSS**, in a concerted effort by a small number of academic libraries in the United States and the United Kingdom to identify and preserve this at-risk content. Although the act of preservation required some attention and (minimal) effort on the part of the editors (e.g., to grant permission to archive its content, and to post a manifest to that effect in all of its issues), *Absinthe* appears to have been more

against the grain people profile

Head, Humanities Digital Information Service
Stanford University Libraries and Academic Information Resources
221 Green Library, Stanford, CA 94305
Phone: (650) 725-5647 • Fax: (650) 723-9383
<gworthey@stanford.edu> <http://hdis.stanford.edu/>

G. Worthey

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Academic libraries will still be striving to preserve, integrate, and deliver the best and most significant cultural content in manuscript, print, digital, and whatever other formats come along. Anything else would be a mistake. 🍷



Fig. 1: Home page of *The Absinthe Literary Review*, showing the **LOCKSS** logo and claiming (with some understandable exaggeration) to be “Chosen the most important online literary journal by the Stanford-based **LOCKSS** Archiving Program.” Accessed April, 2005, from ALR’s previous URL.

than pleased to participate, even advertising on its Website its inclusion in the **LOCKSS** program (see Fig. 1 below).

This proud announcement is accompanied by an alarming announcement that “*ALR* has suffered a severe hardware crash. All submissions and files are safe, but the summer [2005] issue will be substantially delayed until we can rebuild the support structure.”⁹ Adding insult to injury, during the time this technical failure was being corrected, *Absinthe*’s domain registration lapsed, and its URL was taken over by cyber-squatters, who are currently using the advertising-laden site for e-commerce (see Fig. 2 page 26), clearly hoping to profit from the real *Absinthe*’s prestige, its technical woes notwithstanding.

While it would be an exaggeration to claim that **LOCKSS** spared *The Absinthe Literary Review* a devastating loss, it is still a comfort both to its editors, and to us in the library community, to know that the content of *Absinthe* is, in fact, preserved. As of this writing (December 2008), *Absinthe* is back online with a new URL. If it had indeed fallen victim to its troubles, libraries in the **LOCKSS Alliance** would still have preserved its irreplaceable content.

Exquisite Corpse is the brainchild of poet, essayist, novelist, and public intellectual **Andrei Codrescu**, known to many NPR listeners for his wry cultural and political commentary on *All Things Considered*, and to lovers of independent film as the writer and star of the 1993 documentary *Road Scholar*, winner of the 1995 **Peabody Award**. The *Corpse* had an all too brief life in print as *Exquisite Corpse: A Journal of Books and Ideas*, from 1983 to 1997; since that time, **Codrescu** has edited an online version at <http://www.corpse.org>, a lively collection of poetry, art, translation, and commentary. The online *Corpse* was chosen for preservation in the **LOCKSS** program in late 2005, and was finally added to the **LOCKSS** lineup — that is, harvested and preserved in a substantial number of academic libraries across the world — beginning in February, 2006. See Fig. 3 on page 26 for the front page of one of the first issues preserved in **LOCKSS**.

The *Corpse* is just one of dozens of open-access literary and humanities journals selected by academic librarians and preserved in the **LOCKSS** system, but there was something especially poignant about this particular act of preservation: **Codrescu** and his *Exquisite Corpse* editorial and technical team work in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; between the time the *Corpse* was selected for preservation and the time it was actually preserved, Hurricane Katrina had intervened. Although

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